



SCIENCE & TECH

#10yearschallenge could simplify data collection, expert says

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Facial recognition technology has some positive effects, such as helping to solve cases of missing people, however, the technology can also be used by private investigators to spy on other people, or by parties that might use data for commercial and marketing purposes. (Shutterstock/File)

The #10yearschallenge has recently swept across social media, with users posting pictures of themselves in 2009 and 2019.

Sonny Zulhuda, a lecturer in cyber law at the International Islamic University Malaysia and advisor at Malaysia's Department of Personal Data Protection, said the hashtag could be a shortcut used for data collection.

Speaking to Antara news agency in Kuala Lumpur on Monday, Sonny said netizens mostly participated in the challenge for entertainment and nostalgia purposes. However, he also said users might not realize the photos could be used for other purposes that could help social media companies or third parties in their lines of work. These include improving databases of users' faces based on age, time period, race, gender and environment.

"With such an indicative label as #10yearschallenge, data filtering and interpretation would be so much easier. It's almost like giving a shortcut for data collection," said Sonny, who's also a visiting scholar at Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta.

"For some people, this is hardly a new issue as the data has been stored on social media and the internet. What's considered new is how users have made it easier for companies in regards to data curating and packaging," he added.

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Sonny shared that big data curators could freely verify the data in their database packaging, something that is considered a difficult and important process. "This is because the verification has been done by the data owners themselves. In terms of security, it won't be a problem should the face transformations be stored securely so they are not misused," he added.

Sonny brought up the Facebook – Cambridge Analytica data breach that shook the world in early 2018 as one of the worst cases in data privacy. He also said that facial recognition technology had positive effects, such as helping to solve cases of missing people. However, he said that the same technology could be used by private investigators to spy on other people, or by parties that might use data for commercial and marketing purposes.

According to Sonny, the worst possibility is if parties misuse the availability of face data for identity forgery.

“Our faces, biographical data, communications, movements and the combination of all those things are considered assets in this digital era. Let’s always be aware,” he said. (wng)

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